



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Castlereagh Alternative
Education Provision

Report of an Inspection in
February 2016

Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation.

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) centres, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>

Inspectors observed learning and teaching, scrutinised documentation and the young people's written work and held formal and informal discussions with young people, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities and a group of parents, carers.

The arrangements for this inspection included meetings with representatives from the Education Authority (EA) with responsibility for governance and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Sixty-five per cent (13) of the parents or carers responded to the confidential questionnaire and indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the work of the Alternative Education Provision (AEP). In particular, the parents and carers highlighted their appreciation of the welcoming ethos of the AEP, the patient, approachable and encouraging staff and their understanding of the difficulties experienced by their children, and the significant positive progress in behaviour, attendance and disposition. Seventy-one per cent (10) of the staff responded to the questionnaire and indicated very strong support for the leadership and work of the AEP. Issues concerning the deficiencies in the accommodation and lack of resources were discussed with the assistant senior education officer of the EA and the head of service.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all learners, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to:

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the young people;
- evaluate the centre's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and outcomes; and
- inform the centre's planning for improvement.

3. Context

Castlereagh Alternative Education Provision (AEP) is situated in two temporary mobile classrooms in the grounds of the former Lisnasharragh post-primary school in East Belfast. The young people travel to the AEP from east Belfast, Ards and Down geographical areas. The AEP consists of a centre that opened in 2004 to assist schools to provide appropriate education for up to 20 young people from key stage four (KS4) with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The young people attend the AEP five days each week, and can attend their own school for part of the week. Since 2013 another support unit was established to provide intensive additional support for up to 9 young people with more complex social, emotional and anxiety issues. All of the young people have histories of disrupted schooling and non-attendance and two-thirds of the young people in the unit have not attended school for significant periods of time. Almost all of the young people have significant gaps in their learning, and have below average levels of attainment when they first attend Castlereagh AEP.

Castlereagh AEP is managed by a temporary (seconded) head of service, with a core staff of two teachers, one of whom is the centre co-ordinator, a youth worker and two learning support assistants. The support unit is staffed by two teachers and a learning assistant. Additional teachers and a senior youth worker provide part-time support for a range of subjects and there are a small number of teachers who are employed in a temporary capacity. The uncertainty over when the temporary posts will be made permanent by the EA makes the retention of experienced staff difficult and impacts significantly upon the specialist expertise built within the AEP. The C2k information management system has recently been installed in the AEP.

Castlereagh AEP	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	20	25	24	20
% Attendance	85	79	83	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	90	84	75	30

Source: data as held by the organisation.
N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and outcomes	Outstanding
Provision for learning	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding

5. Achievements and outcomes

- Almost all of the young people have improved their attendance and re-engaged with education since attending Castlereagh AEP. In the last three months, the AEP's data indicates that eight of the young people have attendance over 90%, including a small number with 100% attendance. In the support unit, all of the young people have significantly improved their attendance.
- Given the very low starting point of almost all of the young people they make very good progress in numeracy and literacy. In 2015 all of the young people gained either an entry level certificate in English or mathematics accredited by AQA² or essential skills literacy and numeracy qualification accredited by the CCEA³. In essential skills literacy the majority of young people achieved a level one or two qualification. In essential skills numeracy, almost all achieved a level one qualification with a significant minority achieving pass grades in GCSE mathematics and a small number achieving pass grades in GCSE art and design.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

² Assessment and Qualifications Alliance

³ Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment

- The young people successfully study the Prince's Trust xl Level 1 and Level 2 programmes as part of their personal and social development. The modules include presentation skills, healthy lifestyle, career planning and social awareness and are delivered effectively and coherently by the youth worker. In addition a significant number achieved the Duke of Edinburgh's bronze level award.
- The AEP provides the opportunity for the young people to study for a vocational qualification in bricklaying, joinery, catering and hair and beauty. In 2015 almost all of the young people gained an occupational studies qualification accredited by CCEA. All of the young people attained a qualification in the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) accredited by CCEA. The majority of young people who left last year obtained five GCSEs or the equivalent, enabling them to access further education (FE) and training courses.
- The young people attending the AEP engage increasingly well in their lessons; they settle quickly to their work and persist with tasks and are well motivated and encouraged through the use of highly effective and individualised progress charts. The young people attending the support unit are developing well their social interaction skills through intensive one-to-one support; are growing in confidence and are becoming fully integrated with their peers.
- The behaviour of almost all of the young people at the time of the inspection was very good. They are courteous and articulate learners and are making very good progress in terms of their emotional and social development. The young people are learning to reflect on their behaviour through the use of effective post incident learning reviews.
- The AEP carefully monitors and tracks the young people when they leave and transition to further education or employment. The AEP's data indicates that almost all of the young people progress to training or further education courses and of the last cohort of young people all who went on to training, FE colleges or employment, have sustained their placements. The AEP monitors carefully their engagement with and attendance at their new placement; providing support and guidance to the young people and their parents or carers when required.
- Almost all of the young people at the time of the inspection understood and adhered to the rules of the centre and behaved appropriately. They demonstrate growing confidence and establish very good relationships with their key adults, and discuss and explore strategies to manage their emotions and develop independence skills.

6. Provision for learning

- The staff have created a caring and welcoming educational environment where the young people feel comfortable and accepted. The staff have established excellent working relationships with the young people and their parents or carers, which is highly effective in motivating the young people to engage with education and develop their self-confidence. The breakfast sessions are used purposely to develop the social skills and positive dispositions of the young people who are learning to become tolerant of others, resilient and self-motivated.

- The quality of the lessons observed ranged from good to outstanding and the majority of teaching was very good. In the most effective lessons, staff plan the lesson on a theme based on the interests and needs of the young people which provides suitable cross-curricular learning. During the inspection, for example the young people's participation in a very effective literacy lesson based on the theme of homelessness provided opportunities for extended writing in personal and social education classes as part of the Prince's Trust xl award programme.
- Literacy and numeracy baseline assessments are carried out with all of the young people when they begin attendance at the AEP. These are used to inform long-term and short-term literacy and numeracy targets within the young peoples' education plans. Education planning meetings are facilitated at the referring schools to develop a profile of each young person and agree a suitable programme and objectives for the placement. However, schools need to share more effectively with the AEP the baseline assessment data about their pupils to provide a more holistic overview and inform planning.
- The staff meet at the start and end of each day to discuss and review collaboratively, the young people's day, their engagement in learning and social interactions. Progress is carefully recorded and monitored with updated planning to improve the programmes of support to meet the individual needs of each young person. The staff are skilled in using positive behaviour and de-escalation strategies to enable the young people to recognise and understand the causes of their behaviours and to use a range of effective strategies to relieve their stress and cope with the challenges in their lives.
- The AEP's high quality programme for numeracy, demonstrates progression and meets the needs of the young people. There is broad and balanced coverage across the areas of mathematics and there is a clear focus on developing the young people's problem-solving skills through research-based activities related to real life contexts. The AEP have identified appropriately the need to develop further research activities in the delivery of GCSE mathematics.
- The planning for literacy enables the young people to consolidate their learning and achieve higher levels of accreditation. The co-ordinator is developing the literacy programme further to ensure a comprehensive and consistent approach across the service and within the provision. In the most effective practice, there is a clear focus on sharing learning intentions and success criteria with the young people, enabling them to self-evaluate and improve their work. It is important that the effective practice is disseminated with all staff.
- The staff have identified appropriately the need to develop ICT resources and equipment within the centre to a level comparable with mainstream schools to further the pupils' learning. The C2k facility has been installed recently and staff require further training and development to use the resource effectively.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. There is an ethos of care and mutual respect and an inclusive and stimulating learning environment. Staff have high expectations of the young people and demonstrate compassion and commitment to their well-being. The young people benefit greatly from the very good opportunities to develop their personal and social skills through skilful and relevant teaching and youth work. Consequently the young people develop positive attitudes to education and show a willingness and maturity in their ability to interact with adults and their peers.

- In discussions with inspectors, the young people spoke enthusiastically about how much they value the support they receive from staff which enables them to develop positive attitudes towards themselves and others. There are effective links with a range of appropriate support agencies, including a senior youth worker trained in therapeutic counselling.
- The AEP provides a broad and balanced KS4 curriculum in collaboration with the referring schools. In the most effective practice, a small number of young people successfully return to their school on a part time basis each week to take accredited courses in accordance with the Department of Education EOTAS guidance. The AEP has planned appropriately to develop the good practice with schools to include all of the young people when appropriate.
- The support unit is very effective in providing intensive intervention and support for the young people enabling them to learn to deal effectively with their anxieties and issues and successfully re-engage with education. The unit's data indicates that the significant progress made by a small number of the young people, enabled them to successfully return to school on a full-time basis.
- The staff use the temporary accommodation provided for Castlereagh AEP in the best way possible to meet the needs of the young people and provide a cosmetically attractive environment for learning. However the mobile classrooms are in a poor state of repair, are too small and have not been designed to provide for the needs of young people with social emotional and behavioural difficulties and as a result are not fit for purpose. (Appendix 1)
- The young people are supported effectively and with sensitivity by the Department for Employment and Learning careers service to identify the qualities, skills and qualifications they need to develop in preparation for employment. They are guided well to make appropriate choices of realistic career paths. All of the young people have the opportunity to participate in relevant work experience and vocational education in a range of occupational areas.
- The young people are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles, they are taught about healthy eating and nutrition and have the opportunity to cook and learn basic independent living skills. The practical experience is reinforced and developed by other aspects of the curriculum and contributes to accredited learning. The centre makes good use of local recreational facilities to support the young people to adopt active lifestyles and they have the opportunity to participate in an outdoor pursuits programme.

7. Leadership and management

- The AEP's senior management know all of the young people and their parents well and enjoy the confidence and respect of the young people and their families. They are highly committed to the social, emotional and academic development of the young people. The AEP is managed skilfully and the staff work effectively to ensure a calm orderly and pleasant working environment that meets the needs of all of the young people.

- The head of service has a well-focused development plan and an appropriate strategic vision for the further development of the centre within the EOTAS provision in accordance with the Department of Education EOTAS guidance. The well-being of the young people is central to all planning for the provision.
- The AEP staff are highly effective in their use of de-escalation and behaviour support strategies when working with the young people. They are supported on a regular basis by educational psychologists who work with the young people and advise the staff. A senior youth worker trained and accredited in therapeutic counselling provides weekly support to the young people. The leadership of the AEP and the mainstream schools need to agree ways in which the effective support strategies and therapeutic practice can be disseminated to staff in mainstream schools to develop their capacity to address the complex needs of the young people and prevent them from disengaging from learning.
- The centre is governed by the EA and based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection the parents and staff can have confidence in the aspects of the governance evaluated. The assistant senior education officer with responsibility for governance is kept well informed about the centre's provision. Within the context of transition to the EA, there is a need to reflect the requirements and demands of the EOTAS service through implementing the actions outlined in the AEP development plan in an efficient and timely manner. In addition, there is a need to review the management structure to ensure there is a distributed management team in place to share the responsibilities and plan strategically for the centre. The EA should consider how to facilitate the greater involvement of local referring schools, the community and parents in supporting the work of the centre.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the organisation has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The young people feel safe in the centre and know who they can speak to if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Overall Effectiveness

Castlereagh AEP has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the centre sustains improvement.

Accommodation

1. The temporary accommodation provided by the two mobile classrooms is unsuitable for the provision of sustained high quality education for vulnerable young people with social emotional and behavioural difficulties.
2. There is a need for separate toilet facilities for staff and young people.
3. There are single glazed ill-fitting windows that make the rooms very cold in the winter and consequently have a negative impact on the young people and their learning.
4. The mobile classroom used as the support unit is in a poor state of repair with ill fitting doors and windows. The exterior cladding is not weatherproof in places and has rotted away leaving exposed areas around door frames and to the base of the building.
5. The rooms are poorly designed and the ICT room is too small and unfit for purpose.
6. The design of the accommodation makes it difficult to supervise the young people.
7. The limited accommodation has a negative impact on the development of the curriculum.
8. There are no rooms available to use for withdrawal counselling support or for visiting professionals to meet with young people or their parents to discuss confidential issues.
9. The facilities for home economics are unsuitable and are part of the open common room area and poses health and safety risks.
10. The accommodation is too small and the temporary buildings do not comply with acceptable standards of modern educational buildings.

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